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ABSTRACT

This practicum paper reports on a project undertaken to enhance the knowledge of age-appropriate learning for parents of 3-year-old preschoolers. The project implemented a variety of techniques and strategies to improve parent knowledge, including parent education classes, a monthly newsletter for parents that addressed current research on age-appropriate learning, and the creation of a parent support group. Results from surveys conducted immediately before and 12 weeks after the introduction of the program indicated that the project was successful in increasing parents' knowledge of age-appropriate activities and expectations for their preschool children. Appendixes provide: (1) copies of the parent survey; (2) results of the pre- and post-implementation survey; (3) copies of the parent newsletter; (4) a parent self-help checklist; (5) a list of child development characteristics; (6) a list of appropriate books for preschoolers; (7) a children's story, "Scat the Cat"; (8) tips for parents; (9) a list of reading and writing readiness skills; and (10) a copy of the parent support group questionnaire. Contains 24 references. (MDM)

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ED 363 421

EDUCATING PARENTS ON DEVELOPMENTALLY AGE-APPROPRIATE LEARNING IN PRESCHOOL

by
Mitzi C. Brown

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A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Center for Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference.

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ABSTRACT

Educating Parents on Developmentally Age-Appropriate Learning in Preschool. Brown, Mitzi C., 1993: Practicum Report, Nova University, The Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors: Preschool program/Parent Education Classes/Age-Appropriate learning/Preschool Curriculum

This practicum was designed to educate parents of preschoolers on developmentally age-appropriate learning processes. The implementation of parent education classes and a monthly newsletter were used to educate the targeted parents of preschoolers. The parent classes addressed; Play, Developmentally Appropriate Learning, Emergent Readers and Writers, and Ages and Stages. The monthly newsletters provided current research on developmentally appropriate learning.

Overall, the results of the practicum were positive. The results indicated increased knowledge of age-appropriate learning. The parents were able to identify age-appropriate activities and expectations for their preschool child. It was concluded the parents had a better understanding of how preschool children learn and develop.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

Background

The Christian preschool was located in a southeastern state. The city had a population of 22,227 (Chamber of Commerce, Sept. 21, 1992). The area was ranked highly as a prime location for quality urban living.

On September 22, 1985, a Task Force was created by the church to develop a Christian Preschool. Due to various reasons, the preschool concept was tabled until 1987. The Work Area on Education formed a Preschool Committee in December of 1987 to prepare all necessary information for opening the Christian Preschool in September of 1988.

The Preschool Committee met monthly to develop a master plan to prove the need for a Christian preschool. In addition, the committee had to verify the preschool would be able to support itself financially. The committee presented the following facts to the Administrative Board of the Council on Ministry and Finance.

In the surrounding areas of the purposed

preschool, 85 percent of the population was between 25 to 34 years of age. The annual income was in excess of $25,000.00. Of the 85 percent, 61 percent had children of preschool and school age (Sentinel Research Zip Code Data 1984/1986 as cited by minutes of the studied preschool committee).

The population in the area was expected to grow by 22 percent within a five-year period (Market Report by the Sentinel, September/October 1986). The report indicated an overwhelming growth in the area with an increased number of preschool aged children. The church housing the preschool was the third fastest growing church in the state in 1986. At that time 25 percent of the member families had preschool aged children.

A congregational survey indicated 40 preschool children would enroll in September of 1988. Only 44 spaces for students were planned. The survey results indicated 90 percent of the available slots would be filled.

At that time the Mother's Day Out program through the church had a waiting list of over 50 children. A large percent of the children were three years of age. Three preschools in the area were surveyed for their enrollment and waiting list. Preschool A had 90

students enrolled and a waiting list of 75 children. Preschool B had 130 children enrolled and 60 children on a waiting list. Preschool C had an enrollment of 148 children and a waiting list of 100 children.

The preschool committee data confirmed the growing need for a Christian preschool, and the project was approved. An opening date of September, 1988, was set. The preschool was accredited by the Florida United Methodist Early Childhood School Association (F.U.M.E.C.S.A.). It was later accredited by Health and Rehabilitation Services (H.R.S.).

Upon approval, the Christian preschool guidelines and responsibilities were established. A Preschool Advisory Board was created. A director, secretary, and teachers were to be hired.

The Director would be responsible for administering the Preschool Program and preparing a yearly budget with the approval of the Preschool Advisory Board and the Education Committee. The Director was to be responsible for the financial accountability. An annual audit would be made and reported to the Finance Committee.

Qualifications for Director required a degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, and requirements of all licensing agencies and FUMECSA must

be met. Qualifications determined for the director included at least five years experience working with preschool children, and at least two years experience in administration. The director should be over twenty-one years of age and in good health with a working knowledge of CPR and First Aid.

Teachers had a degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, and met all requirements of all licensing agencies and FUMECSA. At least two years of preschool teaching experience was needed. Teachers were over twenty-one years of age and in good health with a working knowledge of CPR and First Aid. The secretary was a high school graduate possessing not only bookkeeping and office skills but also the ability to deal with the public in person and on the phone.

The purpose of the preschool was to provide a Christian environment to nurture children in their early education. The philosophy emphasized young children should be respected, loved, and stimulated with experiences appropriate to their developmental levels to ensure the development of self-esteem and self-worth throughout their school experience. The preschool would guide each child through independent experimentation and discovery in order to "learn how to learn" and to build a positive self-concept.

The preschool program was geared toward helping the child develop habits of observation, questioning and listening. In order to begin to read and perform other academic tasks children would gather meaning from the world and develop an awareness of concepts.

At this preschool you saw:

No dittos to finish

Only chances to play

No patterns to follow

Only materials with which to create

No complicated abstract meanings

Only ideas and things to relate to,
compare with, match, fit into,
try out, reinforce, invent, discover
and ENJOY.

A typical day for the 9:00 AM-12:00 noon classes included centers, circle, snack, playground, music, story, center and closing circle times. A 9:00 AM-2:00 PM schedule included centers, circle, snack, playground, music, story, lunch, centers, P.E. playground, and closing circle times. The preschool had two, three-day programs for three-year-olds and two, two-day programs for three-year-olds. The four-year-olds had two, five-day programs,three, three-day

and three, two-day programs. Class population ranged from six to eleven students.

There were six preschool classroom teachers, one music teacher, two P.E. teachers, 2 aides, one director and one secretary on staff. The employee turnover was relatively low, and high morale existed among the staff members. Beginning in September, 1992, the student population was 120.

The writer was a Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) teacher for fifteen years and a kindergarten teacher in the migrant education program for one year. Certifications of the writer included Early Childhood Education and SLD.

In the studied preschool, the writer's function was a preschool teacher for three-year-olds. As a teacher, the writer was responsible for the developmentally appropriate education of two preschool classes. The combined class population totaled twenty children.

The writer observed some parents of the students of the study had little or no knowledge of developmentally appropriate learning practices and were ignorant of the characteristics of the developmental stages children pass through (Siegel, 1990). Without the knowledge of age-appropriate learning, parents

unknowingly frustrated their children. Unrealistic expectations resulted from not understanding the natural developmental processes of learning.

Problem Statement

The quality of American education has become a national concern. In recent years, an increased emphasis on formal instruction has emerged in early childhood classrooms. According to Elkind (1987), the emphasis on formal academic instruction for young children is based on misconceptions about early learning.

All across America, educational programs intended for school-aged children are being used in early childhood. Workbooks and self-help books are being published for the use of parents to teach their young children reading, math, and writing skills, a contributing factor to the problem of pushing the young child academically. Parents at the studied site have asked the writer for recommendations of specific readiness workbooks to purchase for use with their preschool children.

Research verified by Elkind (1987) shows when children are instructed in academic skills, or swimming, gymnastics, or ballet, at too early an age,

they are being miseducated. Parents that hurry children are convinced their children are ready for academics. Parents seem to be uninterested in research that clearly illustrates children taught to read in kindergarten have no significant advantage over peers by the end of the second grade (Vann, 1991).

The understanding of age-appropriate learning can promote positive relationships with parent and child. Marazello (1989) stated, parents teach attitudes toward learning that influence children for the rest of their lives. The concepts and skills taught by parents form the foundations for later learning.

The parents of the three-year-olds in the studied preschool demonstrated the need for parent education concerning age-appropriate developmental learning in many ways. The same group of parents put a great deal of emphasis on academic expectations for their preschooler. The request for formal academics for their young children was expressed during an open house held after the first three weeks of the school year. This misconception about early learning was discussed by the writer with parents during the gathering.

The parents and the educators of the preschool had differing perspectives regarding the purpose of preschool education. The parents wanted to know when

their children would learn to write their name, alphabet and numbers. This trend is the result of the misconception of how young children learn (Elkind, 1987). Parents interviewed by the writer wanted their children to succeed and felt a curriculum that demonstrated academic learning was needed. Paper and pencil activities were requested for their young child.

An active parent-teacher organization did not exist in the preschool. As a result, the parents of the preschoolers lacked a source of possible parent education and support. The parents did not have the knowledge base that children learn most effectively through concrete play-oriented approaches as established by Bredekamp (1987). The importance of the "whole" child developing emotionally, physically, socially, and cognitively was not being considered by these parents.

The writer used two methods to document the problem. Observation was the first method. Parent to parent discussions were conducted during open house and field trips. The parents questioned each other on their child's academic progress in school. Furthermore, student stress was observed in behaviors such as sucking thumbs and wetting pants.

As a result of the observations the data was collected and the second method was devised. A survey dealing with preschool expectations designed by the writer was sent out to parents for the study (Appendix A:49). The survey dealt with developmentally appropriate learning practices. Twenty surveys were sent out. All surveys were completed and returned during the allotted time. The result of the survey revealed 80 percent of the parents felt academic skills for their preschooler was important (Appendix B:52).

A contributing factor observed by the writer leading to the need for parent education was the over emphasis on competition among parents and children. The spirit of competition stressed at too early an age can encourage aggressive behavior in young children. Cooperative learning strategies prove to be more beneficial to young children than emphasis on competition.

The purpose of the practicum was to present to at least 80 percent of the parents at the site information on age-appropriate learning processes for young children. The parent classes increased the parents' current knowledge of age-appropriate developmental skills of preschoolers and in turn helped the students

become better problem solvers naturally with the parents guidance.

Outcome Objectives

The need for parent education in age-appropriate learning for preschoolers was apparent in the chosen preschool. Parents exhibited a lack of knowledge of age-appropriate learning by emphasizing excessive expectations of their preschooler. Requests for extended academic instruction were made by many of the parents of the chosen preschool. The parents showed over-concern for the academic progress of their child.

The objectives of the 12-week practicum were:

1. Following a 12-week implementation period, 80 percent of the targeted parents will increase their knowledge of age-appropriate learning in preschoolers by 50 percent. This objective will be evaluated by comparing the targeted parents' responses on the pre- and post-survey (Appendix A:49). The criteria that will be used to determine increased knowledge will be identifying appropriate and inappropriate skills by 80 percent or more of the items on the author constructed survey (Appendix A:49) by answering items # 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 15 with "No".

2. During the 12-week project, 100 percent of the targeted parents involved in the parent education classes will be aware of the importance in the development of the "whole" child, including the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive areas. The criteria used to determine an increase in this knowledge will be the use of the parent checklist (Appendix C:55) for evaluating their preschooler.

3. Over a period of 12 weeks, 80 percent of the targeted parents will increase their knowledge of how to expand their preschooler's thinking to a higher level. The objective will be measured by brainstorming for new ideas using expansion techniques for the story Scat the Cat during the final parent education workshop. This will be measured by 100 percent participation of parents in attendance at the workshop.

Through the education program the parents gained knowledge of age-appropriate cognitive learning for preschoolers. The parents learned age-appropriate learning activities to do with their preschooler. The learning activities presented at the parent workshops were developmentally appropriate for preschoolers, adding parental support of their preschooler's education at the cognitive developmental level of the child.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Research

Piaget's theory of development stated learning begins from the moment of birth. Step by step a child advances to a more mature level of intelligence. All children go through the stages at different paces; however, the stages through which all pass are remarkably the same. Piaget believed children are active in their own development during this ongoing process.

Cognitive development was viewed by Piaget as a process that follows universal patterns. The process is guided by the need for a state of mental balance, equilibrium (Piaget, 1970, as cited by Berger, 1991). People achieve this equilibrium through mental concepts that balance ideas and experiences, a way of thinking and interacting with ideas and objects in one's environment. Berger (1991) emphasized Piaget was more interested in understanding how children thought than the answering of questions correctly.

Since the late 1960's, Piaget's works have greatly influenced the area of early childhood education in the United States. Prior to the late 1960's, the emphasis of American education in early childhood tended to

hurry development rather than letting the stages flow through appropriate developmental paces. Educators are now more aware that children's thinking is fundamentally different from adult's thinking. The thinking process of children is affected by the stage of cognitive development and prior experiences at home and school (Fenney, Christenson, and Moravcik, 1991).

One important area of early childhood education involves helping parents understand how their preschoolers think and learn. Piaget felt play held an important role in development. The parents' and teacher's role in play is to provide material, challenges and facilitate exchanges of views between the players. Historically, adult involvement in children's play was discouraged (Christie, 1985 as cited by Graul and Zeece, 1992). Research by Graul and Zeece (1990) illustrated positive parental interaction with children actually fostered cognitive gain.

Play is the most important work young children do (Bredekamp, 1986 as cited by Graul and Zeece, 1992). Children learn new skills and refine the ability to deal with complex emotions of the real world through play. In repeated play experiences, children can clarify and master many fundamental physical, social and intellectual skills and concepts (Isenberg and

Jacobs, 1982 as cited in Practical Applications of Research).

Play is highly misunderstood by most parents. Strother (1982) clarified the thought of play being a way of burning off surplus energy. The idea that children learn best by spending their school days learning basic skills is a common viewpoint, as stated by Pellegrini and Glickman (1989). An assumption exists there is only one way to teach academic subjects to children regardless of age and development, and that way is to sit and attend and learning will occur. Parents of today set high standards for their children. The standards are fast-paced, competitive, and aggressive. As a result of the high standards, Siegel (1990) acknowledged children are being deprived of the pure learning that is derived from play.

Play is a natural part of living, growing, and learning for infants and toddlers (Worthem, 1989). Infant play is primarily sensory. According to Piaget, infants think solely through their senses and motor abilities. The sensorimotor stage is from birth to approximately two years (Piaget cited by Berger, 1991). During this stage the infant uses emerging physical actions for play. The earliest is mouth play (Muenchow and Seitz, 1980 cited by Worthem, 1989). As

infants gain control over the body, enjoyment of playing with hands, feet, and other body parts occurs. Both infants and toddlers use the emergence of physical abilities to explore the environment. Play allows the infant and toddler to master and enjoy physical skills.

Around the age of two, children begin to use symbolic thinking in exploratory play. Piaget's portrayal of the children as little scientists is quite fitting as the child develops new organizations of thought by exploring and modifying the understanding of the world. Toddlers prefer object play in exploratory play. Adults can intervene to enhance the naming of objects, helping language development and to model the function of objects to facilitate symbolic play.

Through play, three-year-olds teach themselves. Problems they give themselves are solved, when at play. Emptying a container of blocks, for example, so the container can be refilled is problem solving. Three-year-olds do not need teacher-directed instructions. Child-directed activities encourage children to discover.

Self-motivated activities are enjoyable and encourage future self-motivation. The natural desire to learn needs to be encouraged by parents and teachers. The desire and drive to learn can soon

disappear if children are not allowed sufficient freedom to learn on their own, without the constant intervention of adults telling them what to do and how to think.

Three-year-olds are too young to sit still and process abstract instructions; they learn best by investigating. Three-year-olds should not be told about objects, but allowed to discover and invent functions for the object. Instead of a three-year-old sitting down with paper and pencil to draw a circle, they should be allowed to explore drawing, possibly creating a paper full of circles.

Marazello (1988) confirmed play is the natural learning medium of children. Four-year-olds continue the learning process through play. Child-centered activities instead of teacher-center activities are still important with fours. Play is used as a method of instruction. Sufficient time to play is needed to engage higher social and cognitive forms of play (Christie and Wardle, 1992). Play is a varied and complex process that requires time for planning, organizing and enacting.

Greenberg (1989) verified the development of self-discipline and self-esteem occur through the pleasure of becoming deeply involved in a self-selected project,

play. When children imitate adult role models, self-discipline is being developed through lengthening time on task. Self-esteem is developed through the independence and success of a completed activity. These two important self-skills result from years of encouraged free play.

LeBlanc (1989) stressed the instruction of social skills, for young children, is most suitable in the context of play. Teachers can observe the play behaviors of the students to identify problems concerning positive peer relationships. By working with children in the context of their play, instruction is informal, yet effective. Children learn role relationships, language skills, and negotiation through peer relationships. In a multicultural society, children share language and learn from each other while at play. Play provides opportunities for children to interact positively with peers. According to LeBlanc, developing positive peer relationships is important to the child's overall development.

Marazello (1988) felt parents should consider themselves as the child's research assistant and the child as the professor. The parent's job is to provide the appropriate materials, time, and place for the professor to work. The materials should be

stimulating, to encourage exploration. Materials such as measuring cups, funnels, water, sand, pots, pans, cardboard boxes, yarn and dress-up clothes are favorites of preschoolers. Children like to find out how different things look, move, smell, taste, and sound, with provision for enough time to explore things fully but not too much time that boredom occurs. When setting aside a place for a preschooler to play, space is important. Room is needed for exploring and moving around safely.

According to Marazello (1989), when buying toys for preschool children, parents should look for toys that suit the abilities and skills of the child. Toy vehicles that are simple to work, wagons and simple climbing equipment are age-appropriate for three-year-olds. Preschoolers enjoy anything to aid fantasy play such as dress-up clothes, puppets, masks, tea sets, dolls and stuffed animals. Simple puzzles, blocks, picture books, and tapes of rhymes and songs are also favorites. Toys for preschoolers should emphasize language, activity, and movement.

Developmentally appropriate learning for preschoolers is learning through play and experience. When preschoolers are playing, they are learning. According to Greenberg (1989) art, science, math and

language development can be learned while playing in the block center. Symmetry, asymmetry, pattern making, design concept, open and enclosed spaces and decoration are some of the concepts of art that can be learned from playing with blocks. For science, balance, gravity, stability properties of matter, classification, comparisons, weight, inductive thinking, trial and error, cause and effect and hypothesizing are learned. The block center is rich in math skills: size, shape, thinness, thickness, length, width, weight, round, rectangular, square, cylinder, areas, volume, near and far, separate and together, as long as, more than, less than, counting, ordering, equivalence, conservation, measurement, fractions, mapping, and many others. Language is built through vocabulary shared from each other. Children playing together in the block center share vocabularies. Planning, thinking, and problem solving also occur while creating block structures. Inventing new ways to build a higher bridge, longer road or bigger castle involve critical thinking skills. According to Carratello (1990) it is possible for children at varying developmental levels to engage in a discovery process which clarifies thinking, increases knowledge,

and deepens their understanding of human issues and social values.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) reported the primary grades hold the potential for starting children on a course of lifelong learning. Parents make valuable contributions to their child's developmental progress. When teachers and principals have knowledge of age-appropriate learning and teaching strategies, parents gain more confidence in the school and the personnel. Developmentally appropriate learning prepares the child socially, emotionally, and physically (Simmons, Brewer, 1983).

In age-appropriate learning, reading is a process of learning to love and appreciate books. Recognition of words follows but never precedes this step. Building children's non-visual experiences are important so that meaning can be associated to print. Simmons and Brewer (1983) further explained the importance of oral language development as a major area of reading instruction for young children. In addition to the areas of oral lanaguage, reading, language and communication, young children need many opportunities to practice perceptual skills necessary for reading.

Language development is one of the most important goals of early childhood education. Research shows if classrooms do not stimulate talking, language development is retarded (Petty and Starkey, 1967 cited by Simmons and Brewer, 1983). Encouraging verbal interaction helps children to improve communication skills.

Learning from involvement, manipulation, and play is appropriate learning for preschoolers. Rather than wasting time telling young children about concepts, children should experience and learn the concepts through manipulation of real materials. The development of concepts and understanding is the basis for future successful learning. When forced to learn concepts and skills too early, the result is frustration for the student. Early childhood teachers should require only developmentally appropriate behaviors that encourage learning. Young children learn best when actively involved; therefore, requiring them to sit still for long periods of time is not age-appropriate learning.

Parents can encourage learning at home without using workbooks and flashcards. Reading to children often will help to develop a love for reading. When parents value reading, children learn to do the same.

Talking and listening to children helps develop language skills. Writing can be encouraged by allowing the child to dictate a story to the parent. Letting children write often encourages interest in later writing.

Children learn from experience. Taking children out into the community establishes an excellent learning mode. Different types of stores, libraries, museums, zoos, parks, and airports offer valuable learning experiences. Children also learn from problem solving and being given responsibility. All means of expression, such as movement, drama, music, and art are valuable learning tools.

In conclusion, parent education is a much needed resource for today's parents. The baby boomer parental population feels pressure from peers to raise accomplished children. As a result of pressure to achieve early in life, the preschool generation is being raised as type A tots - children who are fast-paced, competitive, and aggressive (Elder, cited by Siegel 1990). As Elkind (1988) reiterated, the fast-paced life in today's society is depriving children from the pure natural learning from play. Current research has shown play teaches skills. Physical, social, intellectual, and psychological growth is

gained from play (Chenfeld, 1991). Play has become a national topic of concern in early childhood education. The NAEYC has published major policy statements reaffirming the importance of play in children's development.

Early childhood educators are learning the importance of play through educational research. Parents do not receive this information, therefore have limited knowledge of the role of play in children's development. Teachers and principals hear requests for scores, grades, levels, and tests more often than requests for information on developmentally appropriate learning through play. Anxious parents described by Chenfeld (1991) often feel playing is wasting precious learning time that could be used in reading groups as opposed to play groups.

Solution Strategy

A parent education program was not available exclusively to the parents at the chosen preschool. The parents indicated lack of knowledge of age-appropriate learning for preschoolers. As a result the preschoolers showed signs of stress as indicated by behaviors such as sucking thumbs, wetting pants, and

biting fingernails. The behaviors are not the norm expected of three and four-year-old preschoolers. Preschoolers should be full of wonder, excitement and curiosity.

Parent communication and education at the studied preschool appeared to be the most promising solution to the problem of appropriate expectations of preschoolers. According to research a parent education program should be beneficial to parents, teachers, and students.

The research gathered by the writer over the past nine weeks was the groundwork for a twelve-week program on educating parents of preschoolers on developmentally age-appropriate learning. In all the strategies researched, the importance of parent education was evident. Throughout the twelve-week parent program, various means of parent-teacher communication was established. Three parent awareness meetings were included during the time period. The meetings were used for introduction to the program, explaining developmentally appropriate learning, identifying developmentally appropriate learning activities, understanding parental roles in children's play, and lastly, the evaluation of the program.

As a part of the parent education program, a support group, Parent's of Preschoolers (POP) was to be developed. The purpose of the group was to share concerns of raising preschool children and to keep an ongoing up-to-date parent education program functioning. A monthly POP newsletter was developed to inform and motivate all parents of the chosen preschool on current research, upcoming events, and meetings. A resource library for parents containing journals and texts on age-appropriate learning was started during the period of the twelve-week practicum and then turned over to POP to continue.

As Coordinator of POP responsibilities were to (a) assess the need for parent education on developmentally appropriate learning for preschoolers; (b) serve as parent educator through three workshops; (c) serve as a resource person for parents, and (d) editor of monthly newsletter to parents.

The principal intent of the practicum was to educate parents on age-appropriate learning for preschoolers. The writer desired to help eliminate future stress in preschoolers caused by the miseducation of parents. Parental support was offered through the organization of POP, strictly planned as a

parent education and support organization for the parents of the studied school.

The strategies chosen for this project, using parent newsletters and workshops, would improve parent/school communication and knowledge concerning appropriate teaching methods for preschoolers.

CHAPTER III

Method

The practicum was a project to enhance the knowledge of age-appropriate learning for parents of the studied preschoolers. The group of parents of three-year-olds at the site demonstrated an absence of knowledge of age-appropriate learning for preschoolers. Within the parent group, a disaproportionate number of parents stressed academic skills should be implemented in the preschool program.

For the project, a variety of techniques and strategies were developed and implemented to improve parent knowledge of age-appropriate learning: (1) parent education classes; (2) monthly newsletters addressing current research on age-appropriate learning; and, (3) introduction of Parents of Preschoolers (POP), a support group.

Critical objectives for the project were: (1) Following a 12-week implementation period, 80 percent of the targeted parents will increase their knowledge of age-appropriate learning in preschool by 50 percent. This objective will be evaluated by comparing the targeted parents' responses on the pre- and post-survey (Appendix A:49). The criteria that will be used to determine increased knowledge will be

identifying appropriate and inappropriate skills by 80 percent or more of the items on the author constructed survey (Appendix A:49) by answering items # 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 15 with "No".

(2) During the 12-week project, 100 percent of the targeted parents involved in the parent education classes will be aware of the importance in the development of the "whole" child, including the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive areas. The criteria used to determine an increase in the knowledge will be the use of the parent checklist (Appendix C:55) for evaluating their preschooler.

(3) Over a period of 12 weeks, 80 percent of the targeted parents will increase their knowledge of how to expand their preschoolers thinking to a higher level. The objective will be measured by brainstorming for new ideas, using expansion techniques for the story Scat the Cat during the final parent education workshop. This will be measured by 100 percent participation of parents in attendance at the workshop.

The writer's role in the project was to coordinate and instruct the parent education program. The primary responsibilities were to: (a) assess the needs of the parents; (b) facilitate parent-education workshops; (c)

assist in coordinating a parent support group; and (d) write monthly parent-education newsletters.

The mentor, Nancy Scheid, assisted the writer by working out solutions to many problems arising during the implementation of the project. The mentor for the project was the Administrative Director of the studied preschool. Nancy Scheid, the Administrative Director of the studied preschool further assisted the writer through encouragement, support, and varification of practicum activities.

To enhance the knowledge of age-appropriate learning, a monthly newsletter (Appendices D:62, E:64, F:66) was sent out during the twelve-week period. The newsletters featured a research article on age-appropriate learning, tips for parents to enhance their preschoolers development, answers to questions frequently asked by parents, and suggested reading for parents and preschoolers.

The parent education workshops used many approaches to help parents become aware of age-appropriate learning for preschoolers. A video from NAEYC on age-appropriate learning and a teacher made video was shown during the first workshop. The NAEYC video showed appropriate and inappropriate practice in preschool programs. The teacher-made video

demonstrated strategies for developmentally appropriate practices to develop the "whole" child through play experiences, integrating social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills in the writer's classroom. Parents saw their preschooler using critical thinking and problem solving skills in various learning centers and outside play. In the block center, parents saw preschoolers designing new structures and improving existing ones. The building and remodeling experiences required using the critical thinking skills of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis and synthesis.

Problem solving skills were also demonstrated on the playground as the children discovered new ways to climb on various play equipment. Hands-on materials were set up in learning centers for the parents to experience play as a learning tool. Information booklets were given to the parents with information such as book lists, recommended tapes, videos, and age-appropriate activities (Appendix I:77).

The second workshop dealt with emergent readers and writers. Activities to enhance and encourage future reading and writing were shared with the parents of the chosen preschool. Parents were encouraged to

set examples for writing by letting children see print in meaningful ways throughout the day..

Activities such as allowing their child to dictate letters and stories were suggested to the targeted parents. The writing process could be experienced further by allowing the preschooler to assist in making grocery lists, things to do lists, and household chore lists. A favorite activity among preschoolers is to create a picture book about themselves including home, family and their pets. Letting the children dictate what to write under each picture demonstrates the relationship of word meaning to word symbols. The free use of a typewriter to explore symbols and the left to right writing progression was also shared as an activity for emergent writers and readers. Letting children use pens, markers, and pencils in an exploring way creates an interest in writing. Handouts (Appendix K:86) for parent tips and evaluation were made available.

The importance of not pushing children into formal reading and writing was discussed. The love for books and the development of motor skills was stressed by the writer. During the workshop on emergent readers and writers the love and respect for books was stressed. Parents were encouraged to make reading to their child

a daily experience. Visits to the library and bookstore were discussed as positive steps toward creaating an interest in reading.

The third workshop was to educate parents on the developmental stages of children. Parents were reminded how all children go through the same stages of development, but at different paces. The ages and general stages of three-and four-year olds were discussed thoroughly. The developmental stages and growth of three-year-olds was discussed in terms of this years past experiences of the targeted three-year-old preschoolers. The growth of the whole child through social, emotional, physical and cognitive development was reviewed. Parents willfully shared experiences they had gone through with their three-year-old. The sharing of these experiences and frustrations was received with great support, encouragement, and humor.

The developmental stages of the exuberant four-year-old was openly discussed with great enthusiam and anticipation. Rapid language acquisition and conceptual development as well as the development of the"whole" child were emphasized by the writer. In summary, the creation of eager learners through nacural curiosity and imagination concluded the third parent

workshop. A video on developmental stages of preschoolers was shown.

During the third workshop POP was introduced as a future support organization for the parents of the chosen preschool. The writer explained the goal for POP was strictly an organization run by and for parents. A questionnaire (Appendix M:90) was distributed during the workshop to evaluate interest and establish leadership of the group.

Week One: Prepared for Parent Worksop #1:

1) Video taped my class inside the classroom at play in the following activities: block center, housekeeping center, art center, dramatic play center, and the writing center.

2) Video taped my class outside on the playground in the following activities: swinging, free play, sandbox, sliding, and climbing.

3) Copies duplicated of booklets dealing with play as a natural, developmentally appropriate learning process.

4) Learning center skill labels made for parents to use to identify the following

cognitive, social, and physical skills acquired in learning centers set up in the classroom: fine motor (manipulatives), problem solving (puzzles), sharing (cooperative play), measurement (use of scales and rulers), cause and effect (building high towers), number concept (1:1 ratio), hypothesizing (mixing paints), classification (grouping by color), comparisons (identifying block sizes), and conservation (pouring equal amounts of water into different shaped containers).

5) Notes sent home to announce workshop time and date.

Week Two: Parent Workshop #1 Play:Developmentally Appropriate Learning.

1) Welcome/Introduction

2) Definition of play: Play is the natural part of living, growing, and learning for children.

3) Video from NAEYC and teacher made video of the targeted three-year-olds at play inside and outside the studied preschool classroom.

4) Parent involvement in learning centers - identifying with label cards, specific skills learned in classroom centers. The following skills, social, cognitive, and physical, were identified on label cards: fine motor, problem solving, sharing, measurement, cause and effect, number concept, hypothesizing, classification, comparisions, and conservation.

5) Information booklets for parents distributed regarding play as a learning process.

Week Three: Research assembled for newsletter

Week Four: Newsletter printed and sent to targeted parents.

Week Five: Prepared for Parent Workshop # 2: Emergent Readers and Writers.

1) Gathered samples of children's writing from the writing center and art center

2) Gathered writing materials (crayons, pencils, markers, pens, paper and typewriter)

3) Gathered same of the children's favorite

books (The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Brown Bear Brown Bear, I Know an Old Lady and Goodnight Moon)

4) Demonstration on how to make a book: (Use family photo's to make a book, let child dictate what is to be written under each picture).

5) Prepared handouts of parent tips on how to encourage future readers and writers.

6) Sent home reminder note about time/date of next workshop.

Week Six: Parent Workshop # 2: Emergent Readers and Writers.

1) Welcome

2) Discussed the importance of developing an interest and enjoyment for reading and writing.

3) Writing samples of the targeted children's work shown.

4) Handouts distributed on tips to encourage future readers and writers.

5) Shared some favorite children's books (The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Brown Bear Brown Bear, I Know an Old Lady and

Goodnight Moon. List of some favorite children's books provided.

Week Seven: Research assembled for newsletter

Week Eight: Newsletter sent to targeted parents.

Week Nine: Prepare for Parent Workshop # 3.

1) Prepared parent booklet on the developmental stages of three- and four-year-olds.

2) Prepared information sheet for POP (the purpose and interest of establishing POP)

Week Ten: Parent Workshop # 3

Ages and Stages: What to expect and the introduction of POP.

1) Welcome

2) NAEYC Video on developmental stages of preschoolers viewed.

3) Teacher-made handouts on ages and stages distributed.

4) Parents evaluated their preschooler with a child skill checklist.

5) Introduce POP as a parent-run support

group for the targeted preschool.

6) Administered Post-survey to evaluate parents' acquired knowledge of the developmentally appropriate learning process.

Week Eleven: Research assembled for newsletter

Week Twelve: Sent newsletter to targeted parents.

Evaluated post-survey.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Objective one, increasing parental knowledge of developmentally appropriate learning, was evaluated by comparing the targeted parents' responses to the pre- and post-surveys (Appendix B:52). On a monthly schedule, for three months, parent education workshops were conducted to teach parents of the chosen preschool about developmentally appropriate learning. In addition to the monthly workshops, a monthly newsletter was distributed to inform parents how young children learn best.

The parents received a self-help checklist (Appendix G:68) to increase awareness and knowledge of skills to help a child develop an interest in learning. Upon completing the checklist the chosen parents had an easy reference for what they could do to help their preschooler's development. The parents were made aware of how to help their preschooler learn appropriately.

The parent education workshops made the parents aware of developmentally appropriate learning. By the end of the practicum experience, the parents were able to incorporate developmentally appropriate learning activities at home. The chosen parents have a better understanding of what to expect from the education of

their preschooler now that they have completed the parent workshops.

The results of the survey demonstrated the success of objective one. The targeted questions indicated an increase of knowledge and understanding of the developmentally age-appropriate learning process. There was a 100 percent attendance of targeted parents in the parent workshops.

The parents enjoyed the open discussions, sharing, and hands-on experiences offered in the workshops. Support and encouragement among the parents was exhibited in all three workshops. Sometimes parents felt their child was the only one exhibiting certain behaviors and it was comforting to hear about other children's behavior. The viewing of the teacher-made video reassured the parents in the natural and normal behavior to be expected of the three-year-olds. Throughout the viewing of the teacher-made video, positive comments of amazement were made in reference to the amount of language interactions and the development of decision making skills demonstrated by the children.

Positive feed-back was received from the monthly newsletters. The request to circulate the monthly publication throughout the whole preschool was

extended. The newsletters were often discussed during the workshops.

Objective two, the development of the whole child, was measured by the completion of the child Skill Checklist (Appendix C:55). Each parent completed the checklist concerning the development of their preschooler. The purpose of the checklist was to develop a parent awareness of the different aspects of a child's development. The importance of the development of the whole child was emphasized along with how to encourage all areas of development.

Parents received a handout describing characteristics of three to six-year-olds as musicians, movers, and artists (Appendix H:72). Parents gained knowledge in understanding appropriate behaviors to be expected of preschoolers. The division of the two age groups gave parents an idea of what is to come as their preschooler progresses. An additional hand out, (Appendix I:77), a list of books with rhyme, rhythm, and repetition, was given to the parents listing some of the favored books for preschool children.

Objective two was met by targeted parents individually evaluating their preschooler's development by completing the child skill checklist. The evaluation was distributed during workshop three. The

checklist was broken down into developmental areas of the "whole" child. The targeted parents were eager to complete the checklist. When a skill was not applicable to their child, questions were asked as to how to help their child develop the skill.

The third objective, teaching parents how to expand their preschoolers thinking to a higher level, was measured by a brainstorming activity during the second workshop. The parents told the story of Scat the Cat and were asked to complete and expand the story. The activity was measured by observing and encouraging 100 percent participation of the attending parents. All the parents were asked to participate in the brainstorming of new ideas to expand the story by adding colors, then examples of objects representing the colors.

At first the brainstorming activity was approached with a conservative adult manner. Once the writer encouraged the parents to think like three-year-olds and be silly, the creative juices started to flow. All the parents participated by adding a color and an object to refer to the color. Markers and krylon cat cut out figures were distributed among the parents. Each parent had to color their cat a different color.

then add their cat to the flannel board as they elaborated on the story.

There was great interest shown by the targeted parents to continue the parent workshops. The results of the POP questionnaire indicated an interest in a parent education and support group. However, no interest was shown in taking leadership of POP at this time.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

Recommendations based on the practicum are all on-going events. The writer suggests:

1) Continue parent education workshops on a monthly basis throughout the school year; continue monthly newsletters informing parents of current research, learning tips for their preschooler, and to advertise the monthly parent workshops; expand the parent education program and invite parents from the Parents-Day-Out program to attend;

2) Invite the Parents-Day-Out teachers and aides to attend the workshops on the developmentally appropriate learning process;

3) Offer parent workshop plans to other preschools in the area; Start the project at the beginning of the school year next year for the parents of the two-, three-, and four-year olds;

4) Create a parent advisory council for POP; activate POP; compile handouts and checklists into information booklets for HRS-4C training sessions; and,

5) Condense project to a journal article and submit to Young Children: Dimensions of Early Childhood and Day Care and Early Education.

The quality of student education in the targeted preschool is high. A developmentally age-appropriate curriculum is utilized throughout the preschool. The chosen preschool had an upper middle class competitive population of parents. Continual parent education on the developmentally age-appropriate learning process is a definite on-going need for the chosen preschool.

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Appendix A

Pre-and Post-Survey

Appendix A

Please answer the following questions for a needs assessment survey, and return it the following school day. Thank You.

Answer the following by circling Y for Yes or N for No.

Upon completion of preschool I feel my child should have learned to:

1) Recognize his/her written name	Y	N
2) Write his/her name	Y	N
3) Recognize all the letters of the alphabet	Y	N
4) Write all the letters of the alphabet	Y	N
5) Recognize colors	Y	N
6) Recognize color words	Y	N
7) Tell a story in sequence	Y	N
8) Read a primary level book	Y	N
9) Verbally create a story	Y	N
10) Verbally count to 100	Y	N
11) Recognize number 1-20	Y	N
12) Write numbers 1-20	Y	N

13) Count out 10 objects Y N

14) Improve his/her play skills Y N

15) Work successfully in readiness workbooks Y N

Appendix B

Pre-and Post-Survey Results

Appendix B

Results of Pre- and Post-Survey

Upon completion of preschool I feel my child should have learned to:

	Pre	Post
1) Recognize his/her written name	100%	100%
	Yes 20	20
	No 0	0
2) Write his/her name	100%	100%
	Yes 20	20
	No 0	0
3) Recognize all the letter of the alphabet	100%	90%
	Yes 20	18
	No 0	2
*4) Write all the letter of the alphabet	20%	75%
	Yes 16	5
	No 4	15
5) Recognize colors	100%	100%
	Yes 20	20
	No 0	0
*6) Recognize color words	20%	80%
	Yes 16	6
	No 4	14
7) Tell a story in sequence	75%	90%
	Yes 15	18
	No 5	2
*8) Read a primary level book	50%	100%
	Yes 10	0
	No 10	20
9) Verbally create a story	75%	100%

	Yes	15	20
	No	5	0
*10) Verbally count to 100	10%		75%
	Yes	18	5
	No	2	15
*11) Recognize number 1-20	0%		80%
	Yes	20	4
	No	0	16
*12) Write Numbers 1-20	20%		80%
	Yes	16	4
	No	4	16
13) Count out 10 objects	100%		100%
	Yes	20	20
	No	0	0
14) Improve his/her play skills	75%		100%
	Yes	15	20
	No	5	0
*15) Work successfully in readiness workbooks	20%		100%
	Yes	16	0
	No	4	20

*Targeted questions for knowledge of age-appropriate learning.

Percentages based on age-appropriate learning expectations.

Appendix C

Child Skill Checklist

Appendix C

CHILD SKILL CHECKLIST

Taken from: Janice J. Beatty, Observing Development of the Young Child

Name:_____ Observer:_____

Date: _____

Directions:

Put a checkmark for items you see child perform regularly.

Put N for items where there is no opportunity to observe.

Leave all other items blank.

1. SELF-IDENTIFY

_____ Separates from parents without difficulty

_____ Does not cling to adults excessively

_____ Makes eye contact with adults

_____ Makes activity choices without parent's help

_____ Seeks other children to play with

_____ Plays roles confidently in dramatic play

_____ Stands up for own rights

_____ Displays enthusiasm in regard to doing things for self

2. EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

_____ Allows self to be comforted during stressful time

_____ Eats, sleeps, toilets without fuss away from home

_____ Handles sudden changes/startling situations with control

_____ Can express anger in words rather than actions

_____ Allows aggressive behavior to be redirected

_____ Does not withdraw from others excessively

_____ Shows interest/attention in classroom activities

_____ Smiles, seems happy much of the time

3. SOCIAL PLAY

_____ Plays by self with or without objects

_____ Plays by self constructing or creating something

_____ Plays by self in pretending-type activity

_____ Plays parallel to others with or without objects

_____ Plays parallel to others constructing or creating something

_____ Plays parallel to others in pretending-type activity

_____ Plays with a group with or without objects

_____ Plays with a group constructing or creating something

_____ Plays with a group in pretending-type activity

4. PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

_____ Shows concern for someone in distress

_____ Shows delight for someone experiencing pleasure

_____ Shares something with another

_____ Gives something of his/her own to another

_____ Takes turns with toys or activities

_____ Waits for turn without a fuss

_____ Helps another do a task

_____ Helps another in need

5. LARGE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

_____ Walks down steps alternating feet

_____ Runs with control over speed and direction

_____ Jumps over obstacle, landing on two feet

_____ Hops forward on one foot

_____ Pedals and steers tricycle

_____ Climbs up and down climbing equipment with ease

_____ Throws object overhand to target

_____ Catches thrown object with hands

6. SMALL MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

_____ Shows hand preference (which is _____)

_____ Turns with hand easily (knobs, lids, eggbeaters)

_____ Pours liquid into glass without spilling

_____ Unfastens and fastens zippers, buttons, Velcro tabs

_____ Picks up and inserts objects with ease

_____ Uses drawing/writing tools with control

_____ Uses scissors with control

_____ Pounds in nails with control

7. COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT: CLASSIFICATION AND SERIATION

_____ Recognizes basic geometric shapes

_____ Recognizes colors

_____ Recognizes differences in size

_____ Sorts objects by appearance

_____ Discriminates things that are alike from those that are different

_____ Puts parts together to make a whole

_____ Arranges events in sequence from first to last

_____ Arranges objects in series according to a certain rule

8. COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT: NUMBER, TIME, SPACE, MEMORY

_____ Counts by rote to ten

_____ Counts objects to ten

_____ Knows the daily schedule in sequence

_____ Knows what happened yesterday

_____ Can build a block enclosure

_____ Can locate an object behind or beside something

_____ Recalls words to song, chant

_____ Can recollect and act on a series of directions

9. SPOKEN LANGUAGE

_____ Speaks confidently

_____ Speaks clearly enough for adults to understand

_____ Speaks in expanded sentences

_____ Takes part in conversations with other children

_____ Asks questions with proper word order

_____ Makes negative responses with proper word order

_____ Uses past tense verbs correctly

_____ Plays with rhyming words

10. WRITTEN LANGUAGE

_____ Pretends to write by making scribbles in horizontal lines

_____ Includes features of real letters in scribbling

_____ Identifies own written name

_____ Identifies classroom labels

_____ Knows some alphabet letters

_____ Makes real letters

_____ Prints letters of name

_____ Prints name correctly in linear manner

11. ART SKILLS

_____ Makes random marks or covers paper with color

----- Scribbles on paper

_____ Forms basic shapes

_____ Makes mandalas

_____ Makes suns

_____ Draws human as circle with arms and legs attached

_____ Draws animals, trees

_____ Makes pictorial drawings

12. IMAGINATION

_____ Pretends by replaying familiar routines

_____ Needs particular props to do pretend play

_____ Assigns roles or takes assigned roles

_____ May switch roles without warning

_____ Uses language for creating and sustaining plot

_____ Uses exciting, danger-packed themes

_____ Takes on characteristics and actions related to role

_____ Uses elaborate and creative themes, ideas, details

Appendix D

March Newsletter

AGES AND STAGES

March

A Monthly Newsletter for parents of Preschoolers

What is developmentally appropriate learning?

In recent years, a trend toward formal instruction in academic skills has emerged in early childhood programs. This trend is based on misconceptions about early learning (Elkind, 1986). A growing body of research affirms children learn most effectively through concrete, play-oriented approach to early childhood education.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) believes early childhood programs should provide a safe and nurturing environment that promotes the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children.

Developmental appropriateness has two dimensions: age appropriateness and individual appropriateness. Human development research shows that there are universal, predictable growth patterns that occur in children during the first nine years of life. Learning experiences should fit each stage of development.

Children's play is a primary part in their mental growth. Play enables children to progress through the developmental sequence. Child-initiated, child directed, teacher-supported play is an important link of developmentally appropriate learning.

Questions Parents Frequently Ask:

1) Why isn't my child being taught to write the alphabet?

Answer: Many children do not have the fine motor skills necessary to write letters correctly. If forced too early, the results can be frustration. Child should first hear these sounds through songs and finger plays. The ability to hear these sounds is more related to beginning reading than the writing of the alphabet. Children's fine motor skills are being developed as the students handle tools, work puzzles, and manipulate clay. (Tway, 1983).

2) What can I do to help my child learn to read?

Answer: Reading is a continuum that started when your child began to use language and it will continue to grow through adulthood. Our culture dictates that formal reading should begin early, but research shows that an informal beginning produces more skilled and willing readers. Three important components of the reading process are learning to love books, a broad experiential background, and oral language skills. (Dunkin, 1983; Clay, 1981).

Books of the month

Parent: Miseducation: Preschoolers at Risk by Doud Elkind

Child: What Do You Do With a Kangaroo? by Mercer Mayer

Next Month: Play, the way children learn.

Parent tips: Let your preschooler dictate a story to you. Be patient. Give them plenty of time to compose their ideas and change their minds. Encourage them by asking open-minded questions. Display their written story.

I am always ready to learn, but I do not always like being taught.
- Winston Churchill

Appendix E

April Newsletter

Editor: Mitzi Brown

Ages and Stages
A Monthly Newsletter for Parents of Preschoolers

Research Article

Play is a natural and important activity in children's everyday lives (Strother, 1982). Through play children learn physical, social, and intellectual skills. Play is an essential part of a child's development.

There are many different forms of play. Play is enjoyable, voluntary, spontaneous and active. It relates to a child's development of language, motor and problem solving.

Research is showing the view of play as a way of burning off energy as an outdated theory. Play exercises the intellect of children because it causes them to think. Children learn new concepts from peers in spontaneous and guided play.

Jerome L. Singer points out 12 benefits of children's play:

1. Sheer fun - the positive aspects of fun is that it is essential to growth, and is a strong motivation for every kind of learning.
2. Practicing new vocabulary - connecting words and images, understanding context.
3. Persistence - developing a sequenced attention span to follow story lines.
4. Self-entertainment and waiting ability.
5. Role-taking and empathy practice - learning to put one's self in the other person's place.
6. Decentering and advancing cognitive orientation - learning how to get around in the external world.
7. Preparation for reading.
8. Alternative responses to aggression.
9. Working through conflict.
10. Leadership and cooperation.
11. Resistance to television addiction.
12. Imagery practice - an external and internal communication-related skill.

Next Month: Dramatic Play

Questions parents frequently ask

1) When will my child learn to count?

Many children can count prior to entering an early childhood program; however they do not understand a number's meaning. Giving children manipulatives promotes the ability to conceptualize numbers. When children relate the numeral 5 to five objects, a more important skill than counting by rote to 100 has been learned (Kamii, 1982).

2) How can the teacher possibly teach my child to pay attention to instructions when there are so many activities going on?

Whole-group instruction is rarely productive with young children. Young children learn best from small group and one-to-one instruction for brief periods throughout the day. Children who work in a learning environment where choices are available learn independent work habits and cooperative attitudes (Almay, 1966; Labinowicz, 1980).

Parent tip:
Help your child learn number concepts by counting family members then the plates, glasses, and silverware needed to set the table.

Books of the Month
Parent: How to Raise Children's Self-Esteem by Harris Clemes and Reynold Bean
Child: Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin, Jr.

Quote:
"Children require guidance and sympathy far more than instruction."
-Anne Sullivan

Appendix F

May Newsletter

May

Editor: Mitzi Brown

Ages and Stages
A Monthly Newsletter for Parents of Preschoolers

Research Article

Dramatic Play
"What is really going on?"

Observing preschool children's dramatic play is an exciting chance to see the total child. Younger children are not yet adept at teacher
expressing what they are thinking and feeling and school aged children are not as open.

There is a natural progression to a child's dramatic play. A block, to a preschooler, can become a microphone, magic wand, or even a camera. Dramatic play plots are cooperative
not limited to props anymore. Pre-schoolers come up with ideas, explain them to each other, build one one another's thoughts and maybe incorporate a prop or two.

With all of these new imaginative plots comes opportunities to use language. New vocabulary is built and shared as the children engage in dialogues. Devising these plots children are actually learning how to create stories cooperatively.

The preschooler masters normal events in their lives through dramatic play. This type of play affords children wonderful chances to try out different solutions and roles in very safe settings because there is no right or wrong in dramatic play.

Questions parents frequently ask

1) Does preschool really help prepare my child for "real school"?

Your child's preschool teacher is trained to be an educator and works very hard to help each student make the transition from home to school. Activities are planned to help children develop independence, enhance motor skills, encourage creative thinking, and promote learning. These skills are a must to be successful with academics.

2) How can my child learn anything in such a noisy classroom?

Promoting children's language development is one of the highest goals of early childhood education. Teachers encourage verbal interaction to help improve communication skills. Â good early childhood classroom is active and noisy. Singing, building cooking, manipulating, and role-playing are all teaching and learning experiences for young children.

Quote:
"A mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimension."
-Oliver Wendall Holmes

Parent tip:
Create a dress up box for your child. Remember girls can be firefighters and policemen and boys can be nurses and teachers too!

Book of the Month:
Parent: The Hurried Child by David Elkin
Child: The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

Appendix G

Parent Self-Help Checklist

Appendix G

PARENT SELF-HELP CHECKLIST

		Yes	No
1.	I read to my child every day.	___	___
2.	If my child asks for it, I'll read the same book aloud repeatedly.	___	___
3.	When I read aloud, my child sits on my lap or very close beside me and is in a position to follow along in the book.	___	___
4.	My child has seen me read frequently.	___	___
5.	My child has seen a man and a woman reading.	___	___
6.	There are books, magazines, and newspapers in our home.	___	___
7.	My child has books of his own and a place to keep them.	___	___
8.	Books and magazines are an important part of my gift-giving for each child.	___	___
9.	Our conversations go beyond daily functions like eating, dressing, bathing. For example, we talk about what happens in our family and		

	Yes	No
neighborhood and why things are done the way they are.	___	___
10. I give my child opportunities to express himself/herself through art, play and talking.	___	___
11. I am a concerned and interested listener, showing my child that his feelings and interests are important to me.	___	___
12. My child knows I value readings as much as I do watching television.	___	___
13. I control the amount of time my child spends watching television and the types of program.	___	___
14. I provide many interesting and varied experiences for my child, such as visits to parades and fairs, restaurants, cities and towns of different sizes, concerts, beaches, mountains, lakes, and rivers and nature walks.	___	___
15. I provide plenty of paper, pencils, and crayons and/or a chalkboard for play activities.	___	___

	Yes	No
16. We play games that help my child see differences and likenesses in objects in our home.	___	___
17. My child has a library and has a chance to use it regularly.	___	___
18. I transmit a positive attitude toward schools and teachers.	___	___
19. My child's hearing and vision are checked regularly.	___	___
20. I am sure my child receives a balanced diet.	___	___
21. I value my child's teacher as a professional.	___	___
22. I let my child have family responsibilities.	___	___
23. I let my child prepare food.	___	___
24. My child sees me write.	___	___
25. I let my child help make list by having him or her tell me what needs to be added	___	___

Appendix H

Characteristics

Appendix H

Characteristics as a Musician

(Fenny, 1991)

Younger preschooler (3-4 years)

- Is particularly responsive to strongly rhythmic music
- Moves and sings to music
- Sings spontaneously in play
- Has comfortable singing range (D to A above middle C)
- Enjoys repeating same song many times
- Enjoys using instruments
- Responds at own tempo

Older preschooler and kindergartner (4-6 years)

- Can participate in group music activities and games
- Can enjoy focused listening activities
- Increased singing range from A below middle C to C# an octave above middle C
- Increasingly accurate in matching pitch and tempo
- Can synchronize movement with music
- Can identify and use simple instruments appropriately

Characteristics as a Mover

Younger preschooler (3-4 years)

- Enjoys repetition of movement activities
- Enjoys directed movement activities
- Learns to hop on one foot
- Begins to gallop
- Runs efficiently but cannot stop or turn quickly
- Jumps for distance
- Catches large ball

Older preschooler and kindergartner (4-6 years)

- Can move body parts in isolation with practice
- Can participate in group activities and games
- Can synchronize movement with music
- Runs quickly, controls speed, stopping, and turning
- Understands and can move forward, backward, sideways, up, down, fast, slow, lightly, heavily
- Gallops skillfully
- Skips skillfully by age six
- Catches a small ball
- Kicks ball in mature style
- Balances on one foot

Characteristics as an Artist

Younger preschooler (3-4 years)

Scribbling stage in art continues

- Explores and manipulates materials
- Experiences art as exploratory play discovering what can be done with color, texture, tools, and techniques
- Often repeats an action
- Perceives shapes in work
- Begins to name and control scribbles
- Process not product important, may destroy work during process
- Work may not be pleasing to adults

Older Preschooler and kindergartner (4-6 years)

Preschematic stage in art

- Creates definite forms and shapes
- Represents feelings and ideas
- Represents what is known and what is important to the child not what is seen or important to adults (may not be recognizable to adults)
- Work becomes more and more detailed
- preplans and implements

- Rarely destroys work during the process
- Relationship between aspects of the work

Appendix I

Booklist

Appendix I

Booklist

Rhyme, Rhythm and Repetition

Ahlberg, Janet and Allen. Each Peach Pear Plum. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1985.

Aliki. Hush Little Baby. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968.

Allen, Pamela. Who Sank the Boat? Crystal Lake, Illinois: Rigby Education, 1987.

Arno, Ed. The Gingerbread Man. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1985.

Bonne, Rose. I Know An Old Lady. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1985.

Brown, Margaret wise. Goodnight Moon. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984.

Cairns, Scharlaine. Oh No! Crystal Lake, Illinois: Rigby Education, 1987.

Cowley, Joy. Mrs. Wishy-Washy. San Diego: The Wright Group, 1987.

Kraus, Robert. Whose Mouse Are You? New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. (Aladdin Books), 1972.

Martin, Bill, Jr. Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? Toronto: Holt, Reinhart & Winston, Inc. 1982.

Melser, June and Joy Cowley. Grandpa, Grandpa. San Diego: The Wright Group, 1987.

Parkes, Brenda. Who's in the Shed? Crystal Lake, Illinois: Rigby Education, 1986.

Rhyme

Gardner, Majory, et al. (Illus.) Time for a Rhyme. Crystal Lake, Illinois: Rigby Education, 1987.

Gelman, Rita Golden. More Spaghetti I Say. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1986.

Gelman, Rita Golden. Mortimer K. Saves the Day. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1985. (c.o.p.)

Gelman, Rita Golden. Pets for Sale. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1986.

Gelman, Rita Golden. Why Can't I Fly? New York: Scholastic Inc., 1986.

Glusac, Randy et al (Illus.) Time for a Number Rhyme. Crystal Lake, Illinois: Rigby Education, 1987.

Repetition

Brown, Margaret Wise. The Runaway Bunny. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977.

Carle, Eric. The Very Hungry Caterpillar. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1987.

Chase, Edith Newlin. The New Baby Calf. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1984.

Cowley, Joy. Greedy Cat. New York: Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc. 1988.

Galdone, Paul. The Three Bears. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1984.

Galdone, Paul. The Three Billy Goats Gruff. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981.

Guilfoile, Elizabeth. Nobody Listens to Andrew. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1973.

Hutchins, Pat. The Doorbell Rang. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1987.

Kent, Jack. The Fat Cat. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1987.

Krauss, Ruth. The Carrot Seed. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1984. (c.o.p.)

Long, Earlene. Gone Fishing. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company (Sandpiper Books), 1987.

McGovern, Ann. Too Much Noise. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1984.

Mayer, Mercer. If I Had. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1977.

Melser, June and Joy Cowley. In a Dark Dark Wood. San Diego: The Wright Group, 1987.

Parkes, Brenda and Judith Smith. (retold by) The

Enormous Watermelon. Crystal Lake, Illinois: Rigby Education, 1986.

Wagner, Justin. The Bus Ride. (Reading Unlimited Program) Glenview Illinois: Scott, Foresman & company, 1976. (c.o.p.)

Appendix J

Scat the Cat

Appendix J

SCAT THE CAT

Scat, the cat, looked and saw that all of his brothers and sisters were BLACK. He decided he'd like to be some other color. So he said

"I'm Scat, the cat,
I'm sassy and fat.
I can change my color
Just like that."

All of a sudden he turned GREEN. His friends couldn't find him because he was the color of the trees, leaves, and grass. He was unhappy so he said, (repeat verse). All of a sudden the turned BLUE. He was the color of water, of the sky and the pond. He looked in the pond and fell in. He liked the water. Timothy Turtle swam along and said, "Hop on my back." Timothy Turtle carried Scat, the cat, out of the water. This scared him so badly that he didn't want to be blue any more, so he said (repeat verse).

Now Scat, the cat, became YELLOW like the sun. On his way through the jungle, he met his cousin Leo, the lion, who growled, "I'm only the only one who is supposed to be yellow. He growled so fiercely at the poor little Scat, that Scat became afraid of the lion, so he said (repeat verse).

Scat had turned himself **BROWN.** Brown as the falling leaves in autumn, and brown as the nuts and acorns. While he lay dozing sleepily among the brown leaves in the yard, he started thinking, "People will be raking up these leaves. Will they rake me up and carry me off before I can escape?" So he said (repeat verse).

The first thing he knew he was ORANGE. Just like oranges and carrots. Now, he liked to climb up the orange tree and sit and watch for birds. He looked at an orange, and he looked at himself. "Oh! Oh!" he thought to himself. "What if the orange pickers come and carry me away with the oranges to the packing house and ship me off!" He really became frightened, so he said (repeat verse).

Then he turned RED. Red as a cherry or an apple. He went to play with his brothers and sisters and friends. They all laughed at him, and he felt so sad. He thought about himself and said, "I don't want to be red like an apple, I don't want to be green like the grass, trees, and leaves. I don't want to be blue like the sky and water. I don't want to be yellow like Leo, the lion. I don't want to be brown like the falling leaves, acorns and nuts. And I don't want to be orange like a carrot. I want my brothers and sisters and friends to play with me again. I want to be BLACK like

they are so I can play with them. so he said (repeat verse).

So he changed back to BLACK again and ever after that he was very happy to be just Scat the black cat.

Appendix K

Tips for Emergent

Readers and Writers

Appendix K

Tips for Emergent Readers and Writers

1. Set an example: Read and write where your child can observe you
2. Answer questions about letters and words
3. Read signs aloud. Say "Stop, S-T-O-P"
4. Take dictation from your child
5. Provide lots of writing materials
6. Mail a special picture letter to a favorite relative or friend
7. Make list together
8. Be ready to help - be patient
9. Ask your child to tell you about what he/she is writing
10. Make the alphabet song one of many in your repertoire
11. Create a cozy reading corner
12. Visit the library
13. Visit the bookstore
14. Buy books for gifts
15. Handle books with care

Appendix L

Readiness and Writing

Readiness Skills

Appendix L

Reading Readiness Skills

	Yes	No
1) Holds the book right side up	___	___
2) Begins at/identifies front of book	___	___
3) Opens book correctly and turns pages (front-to-back, one-by-one)	___	___
4) Knows where to start	___	___
5) Points to print	___	___
6) Attends to picture	___	___
7) Attends to pictures, forming oral stories	___	___

Writing Readiness Skills

1) Drawing (as writing)	___	___
2) Scribble (imitation of writing)	___	___
3) Attempts to record own ideas	___	___
4) Has directional knowledge	___	___
5) Tells you about what he/she has written	___	___
6) Has directional pattern	___	___

Appendix M

P.O.P. Questionnaire

Appendix M

Parents of Preschoolers

P.O.P.

Parents and teachers have a partnership in children's education. Research shows that when parents work closely with teachers the children benefit through greater achievement.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to assess the interest of parents for a parent support group.

Please answer the following:

1) Are you interested in finding out how you and the teacher can work together to further the development of your child?

Yes_____ No_____

2) Are you interested in learning which activities are appropriate for your child's age level?

Yes_____ No_____

3) Are you interested in learning how to reduce stress for your child?

Yes_____ No_____

4) Are you interested in learning more about parenting skills?

Yes_____ No_____

5) What are your concerns as a parent of a preschooler?

6) Do you think you would benefit from a support group?

7) Would you be interested in a leadership position for P.O.P.?

Yes_____ No_____

8) Would you be interested in being on the program committee for P.O.P.?

Yes_____ No_____